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Objections to Charity-Schools candidly answered:

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT
ST. EDMUND'S - BURY,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
CHARITY - SCHOOLS
IN THAT TOWN,

On *Sunday*, OCTOBER, 11th 1772.

By THOMAS KNOWLES, D. D.

Preacher of ST. MARY'S, in BURY.

Publis'd for the benefit of the SCHOOLS.

B U R Y :

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ROMANS. Chap. 14. Ver. 16.

LET NOT THEN YOUR GOOD BE
EVIL SPOKEN OF.

THE Scripture-rule of duty is plain, *To do good and to communicate forget not*: The measure of duty is admitted, *As ye have opportunity, do good unto all men*: and the motive to obedience is important, *For with such sacrifices God is well-pleased*. But notwithstanding this, the rule has been perverted; the measure misapplied; and the motive disregarded. It has been often observed indeed, and with truth, that in the midst of a general decay of every other religious principle, charity still flourishes and abounds: but it must be acknowledged too, that although the root be preserved alive, yet the 'growth of it is often stopped. Perhaps it is, because some, who are *willing to distribute*, are not sufficiently convinced, that our work is good; or because others, who

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have

have not that benevolent spirit, are injuriously endeavouring to depreciate it. To these latter it is to no purpose to repeat our solicitations, for they will always contrive to evade them, either by misrepresenting our design, or misjudging of its objects: but the former deserve to be set right; for they feel the power of godliness, and by a strange reverse of hypocrisy, want only the *form* of it.

IN matters of an indifferent nature we are allowed by the Apostle to yield something to the prejudices of another, as long as they are innocent; for there are many things so indifferent in themselves, that neither if we do them are we the better, nor if we do them not, are we the worse. But in all other cases, we can scarcely be cautious enough in what we recommend, or in what we reject; lest we should offend his conscience by too much rigor; or wound our own by too easy a compliance. Indeed, we cannot always secure our good from the malevolent attacks of open enemies, or the reproachful insinuations of false friends: but we must endeavour to guard it, as well as we can, against the misapprehensions of both. Not that the opinion of others is to be made the criterion, much less, the end of our conduct; but still some attention, or even deference is due to their judgment of our actions, that they may not be discouraged by our indiscreet zeal, nor misled by our lukewarm indifference: for in this case, we *conform* to the world; in the other, we *barren* it.

SUCH

SUCH are the particular reflections arising from the admonition in the text: but it is not necessary that we should consider it only as it related to the immediate occasion of its being given; for it may well be drawn into a rule of more extensive concern, as it may serve to regulate our behaviour in the pursuit of every thing *that is lovely and of good report*: in this too, we must have a scrupulous regard to the estimation of others; lest any slight suspicion should injure the cause, which we wish to support; or any unfavorable appearance prejudice the principle itself, upon which it is founded.

IN the general acts of charity, which is one material branch of our christian profession, all men are agreed: for no one yet ever condemned the good Samaritan, or could, even in his heart, resist the influence of such an example. But in the particular acts they may possibly differ; and therefore every one has a right to demand a reason of our encouraging them. We cannot blame others for previously examining the circumstances, that have already determined us in their favor; and That for the sake of both: for if we are doing wrong, we shall be glad to amend the nature of our undertaking; but if we are doing right, we shall then hope to gain profelytes to it.

Come then and let us reason together. We cannot deny, unless we will contradict an Apostle, that the greatest of all christian graces is charity: indeed, it branches itself into all the numerous duties and offices of human life, as if it were changed and

transformed into so many several characters or graces: into those kindred affections, more especially, which will guide and govern the whole behaviour of mankind in all their several intercourses with each other. For it is submission to superiors: it is courtesy to equals: it is condescension to inferiors: it is protection to the destitute: it is gratitude to friends: it is forgiveness to enemies: and it is benevolence to all Men. *All this worketh that one and the self-same spirit* of universal charity. But it is sufficient that we consider it only in a more partial view, as it is shewn in pitying the infirmities, relieving the distresses, or in any other way encouraging the industry and honesty of those who want, or of those who deserve. If such *good* as this can ever *be evil spoken of*, when it is not made a mere pretence for with-holding our hand, or a disingenuous plea to justify our backwardness, it is from its being misunderstood: and the objections must chiefly lye against the work of charity itself, that it is improper in its kind; or against the objects, that they are unworthy; or against the management of it, that it is ill-conducted. Let us examine the circumstances of the charity, for which we are immediately concerned, and see whether this our *labor of love* ought to suffer any discountenance from such a scrutiny into its Nature, its Objects, or its Measures.

FIRST then, what is it, that we are thus earnestly desirous of promoting? Even to assist reasonable creatures in becoming religious ones. Reason alone is not capable of effecting this, whether

whether its insufficiency be owing to the understanding which is weak; or the will which is perverse; it may be to both: and therefore it will be found necessary, that the weakness of the one should be assisted by instruction, and the perverseness of the other corrected by discipline. Neither virtue nor religion will be held in any great esteem by them, who have never been taught how closely the practice of both is connected with the public happiness of the present world, and with the happiness of individuals in another. They who would deliver the ignorant from this bondage of instruction must themselves be friends to the spirit of libertinism. This will prevail, in proportion as the other is discouraged: and none but such an one, as can maintain, that "private vice is public benefit," * will venture to assert, that the same instruction, which qualifies the Youth for understanding his duty, disqualifies the Man for practising it.

LET him urge then to the disadvantage of our institution, that "this forced education, far from being beneficial, is pernicious to the public," or that "in order to make the society happy and people easy, under the meanest circumstances, it is requisite that great numbers of them should be ignorant as well as poor," † I will not scruple to pronounce him, for such malevolent principles, an enemy to the public; and none of the poor, I believe, will take him for their friend. For if any thing be beneficial to the public, it

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* *Mandeville*, the author of the fable of the Bees. † *Essay on charity and charity Schools*. p. 325, 328.

must be a sense of duty: or if any thing be pernicious to it, it must be that *overflowing of ungodliness*, which arises from the want of such a sense. And as to their own private feelings, nothing but the knowledge they have of its being God's doing can reconcile to contentment in such an inferior station. Some of them are often heard to lament their own ignorance, as an aggravation of their circumstances: others will plead it in excuse for every infamous action they are guilty of: but if we can administer any means of comfort to the former, or take away any pretence for transgressing from the latter, surely both humanity and prudence will require it at our hands.

BUT it is further urged, that this scheme of prevention will not answer the purpose: for that "it is precept and the example of parents, and those they eat, drink, and converse with, that have an influence upon the minds of children." * Doubtless precept and example joined together will *persuade and prevail also*: but then, the less they hear or see of either, the less will be their influence: at least, this will give them some chance of escaping the contagion of bad counsel; and it may be some antidote against bad example: for many, by the advantage of education, have been known to detest the reprobate courses, which an ignorant parent is neither sensible of, nor understands why he needs to correct them: and however it may end at last, for nature is not always to be kept within due bounds by any discipline, yet if there be no evil removed, there is none contracted; and besides, it gives a possibility,

possibility, not otherwise to be had, of some good being gained. If after they have been thus carefully *trained up in the way they should go*, they will run into the same *excess of riot* with their parents, this neglect of duty ought not to be perversely ascribed to their knowledge of it: without this, they might have been worse: but it is strange indeed to suppose, that the less they knew of their duty, the more they would practise it. There are and ever will be, in every class of men, some abandoned: that there are not more, and that these are not worse, cannot be owing to unimproved nature; but that there are so many, has probably been owing to its not having been improved enough: and if this has been the misfortune of some, whilst it is the fault of others, we cannot be at a loss to determine, where our pity is due, or whether the promoting of such a design be a work of charity.

BUT our objector is not yet satisfied. We are told, and in this, I am sorry to say it, some are still ready to join with him, “ that the longer boys continue in this easy sort of life, “ the more unfit they will be, when grown up, for downright “ labor, both as to strength and inclination: and that the generality of them will look upon such labor, as is performed “ in the service of others, in the lowest station of life, and for “ the meanest consideration, with the utmost contempt. ” *

This imaginary ill effect, for it is only imaginary, is happily

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obviated

obviated by the measures of our present plan. † We agree with him, that “ sloth and idleness are the auxiliaries to mischief: ” † we therefore mean to inure them to labor *in the days of their youth*; and to such kind of labor, as can best be taught them, when they are young. Their confinement, during this state of instruction, is likewise such, that even the laborious part of any other employment will seem an acceptable release to them: they are not suffer’d, however prone they may be to it by nature, to indulge an idle inclination; and therefore it can never afterwards appear an hardship to them, that *in the sweat of their faces they must eat bread*. They know the alternative, and that upon the authority of an Apostle, which they have been taught to reverence, that *they, who will not work, neither should they eat*: but without these principles, thus authoritatively instilled into them betimes, it is well known how many are driven to worse means of supplying their necessities, because they are thought the easiest.

AND if this degree of knowledge does not disqualify them for the future exercise of an honest industry for themselves, much less will it unfit them for the service of others: it will rather reconcile them to the meanest drudgery, that can be imposed upon them, when they are taught *not to think more highly of themselves, than they ought to think*; and again, that they are commanded *to obey their masters in all things, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but with good-will doing service, as to the Lord,*
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† See the *Rules and Orders*, at the end of the Sermon. † p. 311.

and not to men: from a willing principle of duty, and not merely through the efficacy of constraint. If faithfulness be regarded at all, it is most likely to be by them, who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. No one can readily dispense with this qualification in those of his own household, and yet he cannot reasonably expect it from them, who with an heathenish blindness, though in the midst of a christian light, know no better, than to call evil good, and good evil.

SINCE then it appears that our work is good, let us consider, secondly, whether our objects are such, as may recommend its advancement. It must be confessed surely, that every instance of real, not pretended want is a proper object of pity and compassion; much more, if these wants are not brought on them by their own vice or folly; and most of all, when they reach not only to the outward man, but also to the spiritual and immortal part; not capable of being relieved by themselves alone, and must remain helpless without the assistance of others.

BUT in order to judge whether this be truly the case of our present supplicants, look into the miserable dwelling of a large necessitous family: if the parents are at all sensible of their children's welfare, and the better they are disposed the more sensible they will be of it, they will not fail to lament the uncomfortable prospect they have for their hitherto innocent
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babes; exposed as they must be to all the temptations of a vicious and dissolute world, because they are neither sufficient to *train them up in the way they should go*, nor can they spare any thing out of their scanty income to procure for them the proper means of *instruction in righteousness*. They therefore cannot but fearfully forebode the eternal ruin of their precious souls, of which they can never know the value; so that, if we *can do any thing*, they earnestly intreat us to *have compassion on them and help them*.

MEN who have had little education, and have less religion, may have so contemptible an opinion of their poor neighbours, as to imagine, that they have no need of either: but if humanity or religion can have any influence, there is no doubt, but every principle of the one, and every motive of the other, every argument of the understanding, and every sentiment of the heart will plead for them.

BUT pass on from hence to another house of poverty, which may perhaps present to you a more deplorable scene, than that of the honest and industrious family. Here you may behold a wretched mixture of profligacy and distress; with an utter insensibility to every good principle, and a gross attachment to every bad example: interesting themselves no more, than their own parents had done before them, whether they *ever name the name of God*, but to blaspheme it; and as indifferent by custom, to all religious duties, as they are estranged
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by habit, from all natural affection. Can the children of such parents, thus *given up to a reprobate mind*, have any chance of escaping *the pollution, that is in the world*; unrestrained as they are from the wildest dissoluteness of manners, and with no counsel to direct them, or what is worse than none? They, if any, must be in the utmost danger of perishing everlastingly, who are continually taught to do evil, and know not why they should do well. Can we, like the Priest and the Levite, pass by such objects of pity, as if neither they nor ourselves had souls to be saved? But in all human probability, the best means of saving both are, to take those helpless children, upon whom misery must otherwise be intailed from their births, under our own care, when their *fathers and their mothers forsake them*: and that can no other way be done so successfully, as by this charitable institution, that we are endeavouring to promote: which in truth exceeds all other charities in its value, if we consider its various influences, as much as charity itself exceeds all other graces.

If any objection then can still remain, it must be, lastly, against the manner of conducting it. But this, we trust, is free from every suspicion, that the most inveterate prejudice can insinuate. Our plan is formed upon such principles, as may guard equally against the two most destructive evils of poverty, ignorance and idleness. We mean to have the children instructed in their duty both to God and Man; and at the same time employed in the work, which will be most

serviceable to themselves : so that their education may fit them for the most useful, and their employment will not unfit them for the most necessary occupations in life.

For their encouragement to proceed in both, the profits of their labor are faithfully converted to their own immediate advantage ; and the reward of their improvement is carefully applied to the best means of securing to themselves a comfortable subsistence through life. If those means do not always succeed according to our wishes, no more, it is well known, does all the care or anxiety, which the most provident parent can take, for the welfare of his children. If they should succeed, the community is then indebted to these seminaries for so many industrious, orderly, and useful members, instead of an equal number of idle, dissolute, and pernicious ones.

If any should suspect us of ill management, our accounts are open : for we do not wish to conceal any thing from the public examination : our only concern is, that we cannot exhibit a longer list of benefactors, whose illustrious example, thus *shining before men*, might encourage others to go and do likewise : and it gives us the greater concern, because our present supplies are unhappily inadequate to the extent of our undertaking ; which we have therefore extended beyond its former limits, that it might be liable to the less exception, and be made productive of the greater good.

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CAST then your mite into this treasury of Heaven: a very small part of what you are willing to squander away in other unnecessary expences, or a little only deducted from your unprofitable amusements, will help to furnish these indigent petitioners with many comforts. If this charitable contribution reached no further, than to *feeding the hungry, or cloathing the naked*, we should not scorn to solicit even for these temporal benefits: but when we *shew you a more excellent way*; when we intreat you to supply them with that *living bread, which cometh down from Heaven*; and to have compassion upon the more miserable nakedness of their neglected souls, we doubt not but you will scorn to be solicited in vain.—As fellow-creatures, their plea is strong; but as fellow-christians, it is irresistible: for it is the plea of their Saviour and our Saviour, who professes himself to be relieved in them; and has promised to reward it as done to himself.

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THE design of these charity schools is to instruct sixty poor boys in reading, writing, and arithmetic, for four years, during which time they are to be employed in spinning also, and to be cloathed from the profits of their respective earnings; and after the expiration of that term, to be bound apprentices to some useful trades :—And thirty poor girls in reading, knitting, and sewing, for four years, *viz.* for the two first years in knitting, and for the two last in sewing; the profits arising from their work, to be laid out in cloathing them.

**RULES and ORDERS for the Government of
these CHARITY SCHOOLS :**

THAT eleven of the subscribers shall be chosen stewards, who shall be empowered to give all such orders and directions as they shall think fit for the regulation of the schools; and that five of these may constitute a committee, to transact any business relating thereto :

AND that the Alderman, and the preaching Ministers, (if subscribers) be always of the number of the stewards.

THAT there shall be annually chosen two Receivers, who
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shall give a fair account of all receipts and disbursements of money ready for the view of the contributors, or any other persons, who may desire to know how this charity is conducted; and that the accounts of the receivers shall be laid before the stewards, and settled by them every year, at a general meeting on the *thursday* before christmas-day.

THAT there be a general meeting of the stewards and contributors at the Guild-hall on the last *thursday* in every month, immediately after evening prayers, when the masters and the mistresses of the schools shall attend with the children, and give a particular account how many children they have under their care, how they have behaved, and what progress they have made in their learning; and the writing-master shall produce some specimens of the boys writing.

THAT every day, half of the number of the boys be employed at one school in reading, writing, and arithmetic; half at the other school in spinning, and that alternately.

THAT no boy be admitted into these schools under the age of nine years, unless the stewards shall see a reason for the contrary; and that the parents or friends of every boy, who applies for admission, shall bring with them a note out of the parish register-book to certify his age. And that no boy be admitted before he has been taught to spin.

THAT the parents or friends of the children take care to send them

them to the schools clean and neat.—that they set them good examples at home, and suffer them not to beg, on pain of expulsion.

THAT the master of the reading and writing school shall be allowed twenty shillings a year for every boy that he teaches, and a chaldron of coals. The master of the spinning school twenty-five pounds a year for his salary; and the mistress of the girls school shall be allowed at the rate of three shillings and three-pence a quarter for each, whilst they are taught to knit; and four shillings a quarter for each, when they learn to sew.

THAT the masters and mistresses shall constantly attend their proper business in their respective schools, during the time appointed for teaching, viz. the reading and writing master, and the mistress of the girls school, from seven to eleven of the clock in the morning, and from one to five in the afternoon, from the 10th of *February* to the 10th of *October*; and from eight to eleven in the morning, and from one to four of the clock in the afternoon, the other part of the year, saturdays only excepted when the children may be allowed to leave those schools at four in the afternoon, throughout the whole year; but the boys must not be allowed to leave the spinning school any day, until they have finished the tasks severally appointed them.

THAT the masters and mistresses shall call over the names of
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all the children in their respective schools **every** morning and evening, to know whether they attend regularly at the time appointed; and if any of them do not so attend, that they give notice thereof in the evening to the Receivers, or either of them, who may immediately expell such defaulters, unless their parents or friends assign some sufficient reason for their absence from school.

THAT all the children be carefully taught the church-catechism; and that proper prayers be read every morning and evening in the schools.

THAT the masters and mistresses take particular care of the morals and behaviour of the children, and by proper methods discourage and punish the beginnings of all vices in them, particularly those of lying, swearing, and profaning the Lord's day.

THAT they likewise set a good example themselves by constantly and regularly attending the public worship, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and that on all fundays and holidays they bring the children with them to church in good time, and see that they behave themselves there with decency and reverence.

THAT they permit not the children to break up more than three times in the year, viz. at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, and never at Bury fair.

THAT

THAT the boys in the reading, and writing school, and the girls under the care of the mistress, have leave to be absent from their school on *thursdays* in the afternoon only.

THAT the masters and mistresses shall receive no money from the parents or friends of the poor children, either on their admission into the schools, or on their breaking up, or on account of their maundys; but that the stewards shall allow ten shillings for the boys maundys, and five shillings for those of the girls.

FROM these rules and orders it appears, that the stewards of these charity schools, being desirous to promote amongst the poor children, educated therein, such employments as may be most useful to themselves and to the public, do propose, besides reading, writing, and improving their minds in all christian knowlege, to enure them to some sort of business, such as spinning, sewing, and knitting. And for this purpose they have enlarg'd, and (as they hope) improv'd the original plan of these schools, by the addition of a master to attend the boys spinning; but finding their income to be insufficient for the support of this new plan, they are oblig'd to apply to all well-dispos'd persons in the town and neighbourhood, for their kind assistance towards promoting and encouraging this useful institution by an annual subscription. And all persons who are thus charitably inclin'd, are requested to send their names,

with the Sums, which they shall be pleased to subscribe, to
either of the Receivers,

{ T. KNOWLES.
R. HASTED.

A LIST of the present Subscribers to the Charity-
Schools in BURY.

His Grace the D. of Grafton.
The Earl of Bristol.
Hon. and Rev. Dr. Hervey.
Right Hon. Com. Hervey.
Hon. Colonel Hervey.
Sir Charles Bunbury, Bart.
Anonymous, by T. K.
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Miss Coppin.
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